

PRESENTATION TO PRIME MINISTER TRUDEAU

By Council for Yukon Indians
Yukon Association of Non-Status Indians
and Yukon Native Brotherhood
Whitehorse, August 17, 1977 - 4:00 P.M.

Mr. Prime Minister, the Yukon is Indian land. We have never surrendered it. Your Cabinet and the National Energy Board should remember this when you speak of pipeline corridors and negotiations with the United States. You must deal with us, in the first instance, if you desire a pipeline through the Yukon. Our people do not want a pipeline.

Our position on the pipeline is very clear: We are opposed to a pipeline through the northern Yukon in perpetuity. We are not prepared to consider a pipeline through the southern Yukon until after our land claims have been settled and implemented. This will likely take 10 years but will require 7 years at the very minimum.

We take this determined position because of the great importance of our land claims settlement to the future of our people and our children's children. We must have adequate time to select and receive formal title to our lands; to train and educate our people; to establish our own institutions for economic and social development; and to build solid foundations for our cultural aspirations and self-determination.

Your government has agreed to negotiate with us to achieve a fair and just settlement. Now you come to us and say you want to build a pipeline through our land. We must ask why you are prepared to prejudice the justice and fairness which you have promised us.

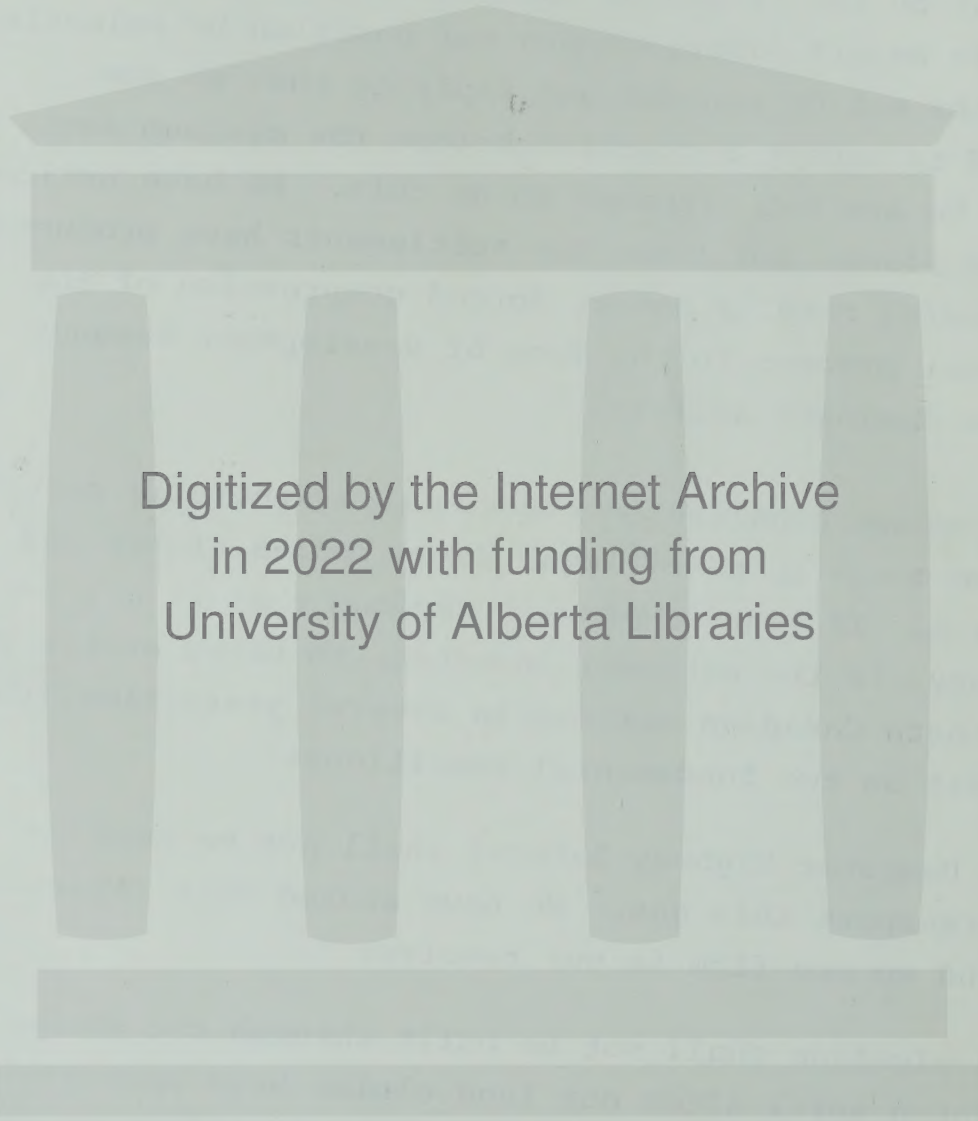
The Lysyk Report concludes that, on balance, this proposed pipeline project will have a negative social impact for Yukon citizens and particularly, so for Yukon Indians. It also says, "...we have no doubt that the achievement of the Indian land claim is much more important to the future of the Yukon than any pipeline." Yet, this Report misrepresents our position by selecting statements out of context and implying that we are prepared to accept a pipeline before the minimum seven years. We are not prepared to do this. We have noticed that the Alaska and James Bay settlements have produced very harmful results due to forced compression of the settlement process in the face of development demands from the dominant society.

This proposed pipeline corridor will essentially serve American needs by sacrificing Yukon Indian rights and interests. If your government decides that it may be necessary, in the national interest, to bring arctic gas to southern Canadian markets in several years time, then we insist on two fundamental conditions:

- 1) A Dempster Highway Lateral shall not be used to transport this gas. We have stated this repeatedly and we are firm in our resolve;
- 2) A pipeline shall not be built through the southern Yukon until after our land claims have been settled and implemented. This will take a minimum of seven years.

Our recent court action to appeal the decision of the N.E.B. is evidence that we consider this matter of utmost importance. We are prepared to take whatever additional action is necessary to protect ourselves.

...Page 3



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We have said above that our people do not want this pipeline at all but if you decide that it must be built in what you perceive to be national interest, then we do not want it for ten years or at the very least, for seven years. What we must do during those seven years is a staggering task. We must immediately begin the implementation of policies, programs and strategies, which will, during that short period bring our people to a position of unity and self-sufficiency so they can withstand the ravages of large scale development. This is no easy task. We know it cannot be done by others. We must do it ourselves and we must have the resources to do it. The kinds of things we will do will produce positive results to improve the conditions of life for our people. Bill Webber has already outlined some of these matters in the telex he sent to you requesting this meeting.

We need appropriate, small scale, community economic development activities immediately.

We need an appropriate housing program designed specifically for Yukon Indian people.

We need training and employment programs that will properly reach Indian people and prepare those who wish to enter wage employment in the urban industrial system.

We need special small business development assistance designed specifically to meet the needs of the Indian people.

We need to develop and implement a whole range of policies, programs and strategies in the area of social development.

We need to run certain kinds of pilot projects and action research projects in order to develop solutions to the kinds of social problems that will come with a pipeline.

We need adequate funding to deal with drug and alcohol problems.

We need additional resources to develop relevant recreation programs.

We need resources so that we can put much more effort into improving the educational system so that it meets the needs of Indians and reduces the alarming drop-out rate.

We need to develop policies, programs and strategies for the cultural and spiritual development of our people.

We need all these things now, in fact, we needed them many years ago. There are those who will say that we cannot do all these things in seven years and produce the results we want. Maybe not, but that is no excuse for continuing to deny our people the resources we need to undertake, by ourselves and for ourselves, a really supreme effort to save ourselves. That is the only peaceful way we can save ourselves. We must be given the chance. We do not intend to lie down and die as a people nor do we intend to continue living like many of us are now living.

That brings us to the future. I must stress that, while we want some immediate results, we also wish to undertake some very important long range planning activities. We

must do such planning so that we can gain maximum benefits from our land claims settlement and also take maximum advantage of developments in the overall economic and social structure of Canada.

We discussed some of these things last night with the Honourable Warren Allmand. We asked him to instruct his officials to start discussions immediately with YNB and YANSI in order that some of these matters may be immediately attended to. We hope that you, Mr. Prime Minister, will also ask Mr. Allmand and other of your Ministers to expedite these matters. It is of utmost importance that your government's response be speedy and sensitive to our unique situation apart from our southern counterparts who deal primarily with treaties. As you know, the Department of Indian Affairs deals solely with status Indians. This situation is not necessary, and only lends itself to division of the Yukon Indian people. In recognizing this problem, the Yukon Native Brotherhood prepared and presented a resolution to the Department of Indian Affairs in the Yukon and in Ottawa. The resolution basically requested a moratorium of the Department of Indian Affairs on their work which related to new policy, program and planning development pertaining solely to status Indian people. The Department, as a matter of necessity, would continue to provide the present programs which are now in existence, no more, no less, unless otherwise

requested by the Yukon Native Brotherhood. While this moratorium is in effect, the Yukon Native Brotherhood would conduct the necessary studies to replace the present programs which would be compatible to a final claim settlement. The major Indian Associations are presently viewing amalgamation. A move in this direction is not only desirable but timely.

We request that steps be taken forthwith to implement the moratorium and to set aside the necessary research funds to be administered by Yukon Native Brotherhood. Program, policy and planning needs are basic to any form of development of people. Research funds are fundamental to all development related issues. People development is the prime issue and is related to all aforementioned concerns. There is a real need to study and document the present situation of all the Yukon Indian people. The development versus the present approach of the ad-hoc nature. To accomplish planned development two elements are requested - time and funding. This will provide us with the opportunity to prepare a complete and thorough statement towards finding the solution to people development and overcoming many of the unexpected hurdles. We trust, Mr. Prime Minister, that you will see your way clear to meet our requests. In follow up to this, we trust your government will appoint a person to be responsible for negotiating these matters immediately. In closing, I trust your government will agree that basic human development

is the responsibility of any country's government. In view of that responsibility we trust funds will be found outside of land claims funding.

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